

February 19, 2025

RE: GM574 – Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Mental Health and Substance Abuse, O‘ahu Service Area Board for a term to expire 6/30/2028

Dear Chair Sen. San Buenaventura and Members of the Health and Human Services (HHS) Committee:

I am honored to have been nominated to serve a second term on the Mental Health & Substance Abuse, O‘ahu Service Area Board, and I appreciate the opportunity to continue contributing to this important work. Mental health and substance use challenges have a propound impact on individuals, families, and communities across our state, and I remain committed to advocating for policies and programs that provide meaningful support, care and prevention.

In response to your request, I have outlined my qualifications, experience, and goals for continuing my service on the board. I look forward to the continued opportunity to further advance mental health and substance use initiatives that promote well-being for the people of O‘ahu.

1. Why do you wish to be a member of the Mental Health & Substance Abuse, Oahu Service Area Board.

It has been an honor to serve on this board for the last four years, and I am humbled by the opportunity to continue my service. I remain deeply committed to improving mental health and substance use services in our community. Having worked closely with individuals and having close family members affected by these challenges, I recognize the critical need for effective policies, community-based interventions, and equitable access to care.

Serving on the O‘ahu Service Area Board allows me to contribute my knowledge, advocacy, and leadership skills to help shape policies that address gaps in mental health and substance use services while ensuring that community voices are heard and represented.

2. What do you perceive are the roles and responsibilities of a member of the Mental Health & Substance Abuse, Oahu Service Area Board.

The primary role of a board member is to advise and collaborate with the state and local agencies to enhance mental health and substance use services. Responsibilities include reviewing service needs, making recommendations for improvement, and engaging with stakeholders, including service providers, government agencies, and the broader community. Additionally, board members play a vital role in ensuring that the needs of underserved and marginalized populations are prioritized.

3. Given your understanding of the roles and responsibilities as a member of the Mental Health & Substance Abuse, Oahu Service Area Board, why do you believe that you are qualified for the position? Please include a brief statement of your skills, expertise, and knowledge that would aid you as a member of the board.

I am qualified for this position due to my experience in advocacy and my work at the intersection of mental health, substance use, and the criminal legal system, particularly in areas related to public service and community well-being. My background has provided me with a deep understanding of the legal, systemic, and social factors that impact mental health and substance abuse services. Additionally, my ability to work collaboratively with various stakeholders and my commitment to evidence-based solutions will enable me to contribute effectively to the board's mission.

4. What do you hope to accomplish during your term of service?

During my term, I hope to:

- Strengthen partnerships between government agencies, healthcare providers, and nonprofit organizations to improve outcomes.
- Support initiatives that reduce stigma surrounding mental health and substance use disorders.
- Promote policies that enhance accessibility and affordability of mental health services, particularly for underserved populations.
- Contribute to data-driven decision-making to ensure that programs are effective and responsible to community needs.

5. Name three qualities that best describe you and how these qualities will the Mental Health & Substance Abuse, Oahu Service Area Board.

- Empathy – I deeply understand and care about the struggles faced by individuals dealing with mental health and substance use challenges. This perspective allows me to approach policy discussions with compassion and a focus on community impact.
- Analytical Thinking – My ability to critically analyze policies, data, and systemic issues enables me to make informed recommendations and contribute to meaningful solutions.
- Collaboration – I excel at working with diverse stakeholders to find common ground and develop effective strategies to address complex issues.

6. Name a previous experience you've had that will be beneficial as a member.

One significant experience that will benefit my continued role on the board is my work in legal advocacy, particularly in cases involving individuals struggling with substance use disorders and mental health challenges. I have worked to ensure fair treatment, access to rehabilitation programs, and appropriate legal considerations for those impacted by these issues. This experience has given me insight into the barriers individuals face when seeking help and the importance of strong, community-centered policies.

7. Can you foresee any possible conflicts of interest that could arise during your service on the Mental Health & Substance Abuse, Oahu Service Area Board. How would you overcome conflicts of interest?

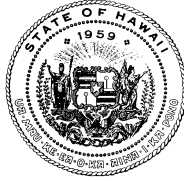
While I do not foresee any possible conflicts of interest at this time, I understand that situations may arise where my professional or personal affiliations intersect with board matters. If such a situation occurs, I will follow ethical guidelines, disclose any potential conflicts to the board, and recuse myself from discussions or decisions where necessary to ensure transparency and integrity in the board's work.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to the opportunity to continue serving the people of O'ahu in this capacity.

Sincerely,

/s/ Jacquelyn Esser

Jacquelyn Esser



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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**Testimony in SUPPORT of GM574
Submitting for Consideration and Confirmation to the
O'ahu Service Area Board for Mental Health and Substance Use
Gubernatorial Nominee, JACQUELYN ESSER,
for a term to expire 06-30-2028**

SENATOR JOY A. SAN BUENAVENTURA, CHAIR
SENATOR HENRY J.C. AQUINO, VICE CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Hearing Date and Time: February 21, 2025, 1:05 p.m. Location: Room 225 and Video

1 **Department Position:** The Department of Health ("Department") supports Jacquelyn Esser's
2 nomination and confirmation to the Oahu Service Area Board on Mental Health and Substance
3 Abuse ("OSAB").

4 **Department Testimony:** The Hawaii Revised Statutes §334-11 provides for the establishment of
5 service area boards within the Department for administrative purposes to advise service area
6 administrators about service area needs to prevent and treat mental or emotional disorders,
7 combined mental illness substance abuse disorders, and persons afflicted by these disorders.
8 These boards also provide advice, guidance, and recommendations to the State Council on
9 Mental Health and the Hawaii Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances
10 as they deem appropriate. Each service area board shall consist of up to nine members who are
11 area residents and consumers or non-providers of mental health services and service area
12 providers, with a majority being non-state employees and non-providers of mental health or
13 other health services.

14 Jacquelyn "Jacquie" Esser, a dedicated member, will continue to fill one of the non-
15 provider seats in OSAB, which covers both urban and rural communities. She currently works as

1 a Federal Public Defender in the District of Hawaii, bringing her extensive experience and
2 knowledge to the Board.

3 Jacquie Esser is currently serving her first term as an OSAB member. It was welcomed
4 news that she applied for a second term. She is an active listener and an effective participant at
5 OSAB meetings. She will bring the knowledge from her current term, including a fuller grasp of
6 our behavioral health landscape and the available community resources needed to reach
7 consumers through better alignment, communication, and stigma-reduction. It will be a boost
8 to prevention efforts to have someone of her caliber on the OSAB, for she has deep knowledge
9 and appreciation of the complications and costs that can exponentially arise when individuals
10 who have mental illness get entangled further with the criminal justice system.

11 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this nomination.

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GM-574

Submitted on: 2/23/2025 10:24:17 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/24/2025 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
J Grant Giventer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Letter in support of Gubernatorial Nominee, Jacquelyn Esser, is attached here. Thank you.

Written testimony submitted in individual capacity.

Grant Giventer

GM-574

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 3:46:51 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/24/2025 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Randolph Hack	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Committee and Chair:

I serve as Chair of the Oahu Service Arrea Board on Mental Health and Substance Abuse, and am in strong support of the nomination of Jacqueline Esser to this position. Jaxquie attends our meetings and brings her expertise as a Federal Public Defender and former state Public Defender tp the Board.

Thanks for your consideration of this matter.

February 21, 2025

To: Senator San Buenaventura, Chair and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee

From: Minda Yamaga

Re: STRONG SUPPORT of GM574 confirming Gubernatorial Nominee JACQUELYN ESSER to the Mental Health and Substance Abuse, O'ahu Service Area board, for a term to expire on June 30, 2028

Meeting: Monday, February 24, 2025, 1:05 p.m.

Dear Chair Senator San Buenaventura and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

I am writing to express my strong support for Jacquelyn Esser's nomination to serve on the O'ahu Area Service Board on Mental Health and Substance Abuse. I have had the privilege of working with Jacquelyn for the past 15 years, first as a state and now as a federal defender. As a dedicated career public defender, Jacquelyn has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to advocating for individuals struggling with mental health challenges and substance use disorders.

Throughout her career, she has worked tirelessly to ensure that individuals in the criminal legal system receive the support and treatment they need rather than punitive measures that fail to address underlying issues. Her passion for diversion programs, rehabilitation, and community-based solutions will make her an invaluable asset to the board.

Jacquelyn brings not only legal knowledge but also a deep understanding of the systemic barriers that individuals face in accessing care. Her presence on the board will help drive meaningful change and ensure that policy decisions reflect the needs of our community.

I strongly support Jacquelyn's nomination and urge you to confirm her appointment and thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.



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Monday, February 24, 2025

GM574

Testifying In Support

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and members of the Committee:

I am writing today in **strong support** of the Governor's appointment of Jacquelyn Esser to the Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Oahu Service Area Board.

I had the privilege of getting to know Jacquie in 2020 while she was running for Honolulu Prosecutor. Not only does she have a big heart and a big brain, but she is one of the hardest working and committed individuals I've had the honor of supporting for public office.

She cares deeply about the people and I have no doubt she will thoughtfully and diligently fulfill her duties as a member of this Board.

I urge you to support her confirmation.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Chair Joy San Buenaventura
Vice Chair Henry Aquino

Senate Committee on Health & Human Services

Monday, February 24, 2025
1:05 PM

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF GM574 SUBMITTING FOR
CONSIDERATION AND CONFIRMATION TO THE MENTAL HEALTH
AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE, OAHU SERVICE AREA BOARD,
GUBERNATORIAL NOMINEE, JACQUELYN ESSER, FOR A TERM TO
EXPIRE 06-30-2028**

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Senate Committee on Health & Human Services,

My name is Jun Shin. I am testifying as an individual in **SUPPORT** of **GM574**, the nomination of Jacquelyn Esser to the Oahu Service Area Board on Mental Health & Substance Abuse for a term to expire on 06/30/2028.

Jacque is an important addition to the work of the Oahu Service Area Board on Mental Health & Substance Abuse as someone who spent much of their career working towards a fairer and just legal system for all. We need knowledgeable professionals like Jacquie involved in crafting long-term solutions. People who care and who have the experience of advocating for an alternative path in a carceral system that has been unjustly used for far too long to address mental health disorders, emotional health disorders, and substance abuse disorders in our communities.

I ask that your committee recommends that the Senate **CONSENT** to the nomination of Jacquelyn Esser to the Oahu Service Area Board on Mental Health & Substance Abuse.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Jun Shin,
State House District 23 | State Senate District 12
Cell: 808-255-6663
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